



PRESS RELEASE

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USAID Launches 2011 Afghan Youth Voices Festival in Kabul

KABUL, AFGHANISTAN | MAY 25, 2011 – This afternoon Kabul's Bagh-e Babur gardens was filled with Afghan youth celebrating the launch of the USAID-funded 2011 Afghan Youth Voices Festival. The event showcased the talents of young Afghan photographers, filmmakers, artists and musicians from the National Music Institute. It also marked the kick-off of national activities for 11 new multi-media production centers around the country.

This event at Bagh-e Babur provided a taste of the kinds of cultural activities that will happen nationwide over the coming months, culminating in a week-long nationwide Afghan Youth Voices Festival that will take place during the week of October 2-6.

Speaking at the event, Peter Wiebler, Director of Democracy and Governance Office at USAID Mission in Afghanistan, said, "The U.S. Government is committed to supporting the ability of Afghan youth and other citizens to access independent media and be able to participate fully in their communities and public life."

The 2011 Festival is encouraging young people to express themselves using Facebook, filmmaking, photography and other creative arts. The festival will provide multi-media training for young people, showcase a women's blogging project, and offer theatre and film workshops, cartoon drawing workshops, citizen video projects, an SMS novel, and much more.

"In the past eight years, the biggest government achievement has been to ensure the independence of media. Afghanistan is a young country, and youth have a key role in media development and freedom of expression. Some have even shed their blood for this freedom," said Taimoor Shah Eshaqzai, Deputy Minister of Information and Culture in charge of the Youth Affairs.

In 2010, more than 1,500 people from 16 Afghan provinces participated in the inaugural Afghan Youth Voices Festival. This year, the Afghan Youth Voices Festival aims to draw even more young people into media activities.

Safiullah Ziai of the Afghan Youth Voices Festival said, "The Afghan Youth Voices Festival is a concrete testament to the inescapable relationship between youth and new media in Afghanistan. It will be a powerful tool to give voice to millions of young Afghans who have an important role to play in the development of their country."

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